

Jorge Garcia, Track 4

Tape 2, side B

JB: —typically.

JG: I once had trouble with a tape recorder and got a lecture from the person saying, “You should be able to run your machines.” And you know, this is from an old-timer, (John laughs) shaking his finger at me just going at me in Spanish about—he was not impressed with the fact I was having trouble with my recorder (laughs).

JB: After we’re done, I’ll tell you the story of my interview with Jerry, and how I mopped his floor with my knees trying to find a socket, (Jorge laughs) that’s another story. (laughs) Now let’s make sure we’re—yeah we’re functioning now. You come back in ’84, did you ever expect to become Dean of the School of Humanities?

JG: Never (John laughs) never, I came back because I wanted the freedom of a faculty member, the thing was, I wasn’t seeing my kids when they were out of school during, June, July, August is when we—the way the varieties of fruits we have now, peaches, plums, and nectarines, you start picking about the fifteenth of May, and go—well with the raisin grapes and then the persimmons until the fifteenth of October. So my kids were on vacation my—literally for three years my kids took vacations without me. Compadres would come up, Hey we’re right here, an hour’s drive away from the big trees, let’s go up there. And I’d say, “I can’t.” So they would stay at our house, and then my wife and kids, and compadres and their kids would go off and spend a week up in the big trees, and I was down there just getting up at 4 a.m. and had a crew in the field, on ladders at six o’clock, and then by the time you get everything settled, it’d be six, seven o’clock in the evening, seven days a week. Much better pay than I used to get, I mean good god, I—as bad as—those were three difficult years in agriculture up there because there was medfly, there was hail, there were some real problems, and then the overextension of the banks into agriculture created some other problems but even so, financially, I was a lot better off up there, and not only that then, as far as style of living, if I didn’t want to change a light bulb, I simply called maintenance. Because the company, it’s a family farm incorporated now.

JB: What’s it called?

JG: It’s Garcia Family Incorporated.

JB: Uh-huh.

JG: Uh, basically it had its maintenance staff, so I never mowed the lawn, I never—it’s a dream in that sense, I mean, the company provided vehicle, gas, just everything, just—you’re taken care of, but not a real satisfying job. But I came back with the idea of spending

time with my kids, and I did come back to—and I would leave at two thirty, three o'clock, and—or tried too, and go get my kids and take them here and there. In fact, my kids—that was the agreement with my wife, is that when we came back, I would not get in that pattern of being down here six o'clock in the morning and stay until six o'clock at night, she says, "What's the difference if you're in the field or in your office those hours?" I said, "Ok." So we started dealing with a little different lifestyle in that sense, and I'd take the kids to work—to school and then I'd come to work, and I never taught before nine o'clock, I'd always teach at nine (unintelligible) I loved it when I teach, I like eight o'clock classes, get in, get it started, let's go. In fact I used to say, "If we could get a crowd at seven o'clock, I'd like to teach at seven." Anyway, because of the kids, I started teaching basically at nine. My kid's friends, because I was always doing the chauffeuring, and our short semesters give us a lot of time, they're still in session until what, the twentieth of June, I would frequently go on field trips as chaperone. Some of the friends would say, Doesn't your dad work? (both laugh) So in '84, life was very very different, but the workaholic that I am, and with a sense of commitment—you know, Jesuits get a hold of you, you're never the same again. (John laughs)

JB: So you came out of that background too?

JG: Yeah, in fact the only parochial school I had was the one I went, I thought I wanted to be a priest for a while, so I spent six and a half years (unintelligible) in seminary.

JB: Really?

JG: Yeah.

JB: Hey, as long as I've know you, I didn't know that.

JG: Doesn't it show? (both laugh)

JB: I shouldn't have had to ask.

JG: Yeah, should've been obvious.

JB: Talk about those hours, I should have known, Jesuit training.

(00:04:20)

JG: Sure, but I gradually—I did that, and then chance came up to be department chair, Carlos Navarro was just newly elected department chair, spent three and a half weeks on the job and he was asked to be an acting associate dean of the school, because Phil Hamilton(??) went over to the School of the Arts, and he said he would do it if I would cover for him on an acting basis in the department. So [I thought] well, he's a friend and I said why not help him out. I didn't mind the job of chair, so I took it over and got

involved in the whole thing last summer when Jerry Richfield, probably a year before everybody expected it, at least from what the talk was, that he would have another year and he would announce his retirement, and we would then go through the process of selecting dean, when very abruptly, announced he was leaving, so we had to have an acting dean. And I was involved in that process because I was acting chair of the department and basically called—vice president Suzuki called the department chairs together, of the school, and asked us to serve as kind of an ad hoc committee of developing lists of potential people, and so one of these we went through the list of people, and who had been chairs, and I had been chair more than the requisite three years that they typically look for, and so they said, What about you? And I said, “No, not interested.” And we had the real go around the committee, and Bob kept on saying, “Why don’t you put in?” I says, “Number one, you’ve put an unacceptable condition on—” they had at that time a condition of whoever was acting could not be the candidate. I said, “—that’s unacceptable.” He would say, “No, it’s a good opportunity to get a year of experience, you’d probably have to leave campus, that’s a real good message.” You know, a Mexican will become a dean if he leaves (John laughs) I says, “I’m sorry, not only that, but there’s a limit to where I leave, because of my wife’s family’s still in the area, and that’s—” you know, that’s why I came to this area in the first place, my wife wouldn’t leave her family. So that’s why I’m here in Southern California and I’m not gonna go a lot of different places, not too far out of here. And now the kids are older and I don’t know, we’ll have to wait until they’re up and out of the house before we can get out of here, although I don’t see it as an area to get out of. So basically it went round and round so I argued against and several of us argued against that prohibition, so they finally took the prohibition off and Suzuki says, “Now will you apply?” I said, “No.” (laughs) And so he says, “Why not? Why won’t you allow yourself to be considered?” I says, “Well number one, that the acting associate dean is from the Chicano studies department. There’s no way in hell anybody’s going to put a second Mexican in. The people will come up will all kinds of reasons why, but it’s—I know what it is, and they’re probably going to come back to the good philosophical issue of two people from the same department.” I said, “But to me, that’s a buzz word and, no.” And I remember was a, what—we were meeting almost every day on this damn committee, and he kept arguing with me, and Carlos Navarro and I were walking back from the administration building over to Sierra North, and he, Carlos—Carlos is really the one that convinced me in the sense that he said, “Why don’t you let them say no instead of you say no?” So I went home, took my wife out to dinner, we ordered a pizza for the kids, and says “I’ve got to talk.” And so I said, “Look, Carlos and I had this conversation, what do you think? I don’t think they’ll pick me, but—” And so she said, “Well, whatever you want.” I said, “No no no no no, this is not whatever you want time. This is, I’ve got to know what you are willing to go along with this, because I won’t have—” even as a chair I would take off early some days and take the kids here and there, whatever. I said, “I’m not going to be able to do that. So our life’s going to change very differently, not only that, I’m not gonna show up at nine o’clock, I’m going to want to get there closer to eight, and so on. And so that’s going to make a change, it’s going to be a twelve month position. She says, “Well it doesn’t make any difference, you’re down there anyway.”

And so we talked about it, and she said yes, she thought it would be a good move to try for. So I came back and told Suzuki yes, that I would be willing to be considered, and two days later, I get a phone call from his office, and he says, "Come over here." He says, "We decided to pick you." And I said, "Well that's—" Well that's when I got there. And I said, "Well that's a real surprise." And I says, "Are you prepared to deal with what's going to come at you?" And he said he was, and I said, "I don't think you are, because I don't think—you know, I'd been on this campus for a long time, and I think there's going to be a lot of flak." Um, I don't think he had that much flak, you'd have to ask him. He's never indicated he got that much flak. There were some people not very happy, and there's still some people not very happy, but no one could've been selected, even an outsider, would've made some people unhappy, so.

JB: And he was anticipating flack over the dean and associate dean from the same department—

JG: Right.

JB: (Unintelligible)

JG: Well that was my anticipation, in fact, he thought it would not be a great issue, and I thought it would be. And—

JB: —and earlier in our school—

JG: Yeah.

JB: —big issue.

(00:09:34)

JG: Sure, because there is on one level, there is a philosophical or valid issue, if you will. And it was interesting the way people would come in even while I was acting dean and say, "Nothing against you, but I just have a real problem with both of you being from the same department." So I tell them, "Look, we're going to issue a joint statement that the border will not be moved north, (John laughs) so you can relax ok?" And no no, maybe I'm being unfair to some of my colleagues in that—I think that under most normal circumstances, you wouldn't want two people from the same department, however, I think—and my wife got very upset with me one time when she heard me talk like this, because we were talking to somebody over at one of these gatherings at the—I called a command attendance things, which—was one of my, quite frankly, if I could just take a little digression there, I told Bob Suzuki, one, I don't wear a tie. It's just not me, I'm just not comfortable with coat and tie, on appropriate ceremonial occasions, I will wear a coat and tie, and I do. And I said, I just want you up front to know that, I'm not—that's part of my conditions of taking the job. Second, I'm not—I've never attended any of the

receptions—like they’ll have a reception for chairs, or a reception for people promoted, never gone to those. I’ve always felt that I have so little social time, that I don’t want to spend it on official things, I’d rather spend it with people that are friends.” And he said, “Oh I understand that, but there are not that many, there are only about a dozen of them during the year that you have to—” I found out that I enjoy them.

JB: Really?

JG: Because I get to mix with a lot of people from various schools and various departments, I met some very interesting people. Of course I’m going in as a dean, and not as a faculty person, that might make a difference, I don’t know. But by and large, it had been enjoyable. Then—

JB: You seem surprised.

JG: I was, I am, but anyways—I took the side trip and forgot where we were initially, it’s an old professor’s fault right? (John laughs)

JB: Well, we were back, by way of the conditions under of which you’d accept the job—

JG: Ok.

JB: —Uh, no tie—

JG: Yeah, no tie, no—

JB: —no professionally connected social functions—

JG: —Yeah.

JB: —which turned out, you did enjoy.

JG: Well, there were certain—there’s only about ten or twelve of them you’ve got to go to, and I go to them, and they’re enjoyable.

JB: The question of the dean and associate dean from the same school, and that was the issue that he anticipated coming up.

JG: Yeah, and I thought for sure that because of anticipated flack, that neither he nor Cleary would make such a move, and they surprised me.

JB: You’re our first Mexican-American dean.

JG: Um-hm, yes.

JB: What difference is that going to make, the fact that you're a Mexican-American dean? Has it made a difference to date? What difference do you anticipate it will make? Does it make it different?

JG: Well, I think there's a variety of areas where I already see a difference, I'm almost, what—amused at the response from Chicano students, or many Chicano students. Where they get a kick out of it, and they like introducing me to people as, "this is our dean." (laughs)

JB: You're a role model.

(00:12:53)

JG: Yeah, I mean—I always saw faculty as a role model, but this just takes it I guess to another area, another level, I don't know. And maybe because of the way I might tend to downplay the importance of those kinds of things, but it's almost—and maybe I'll get used to that after a while, but it's almost—comical to watch the students sometimes when they bring students in, and they make it a point if they're—if I'm available, they'll either bring students to me to step out and talk with students, "and this is our dean" (John laughs) "the first one we've ever had." And they'll say a thing like, You know, this is a very important person. And I say, "Oh, come on." You know? So at that level, I think there's been an impact, I can see it. I think in part, the ethnic origin has a symbolic value but I think beyond that, because I've clearly been committed to things Latino, but not narrowly committed to that, because I've shown over the years in EPC [Educational Policies Committee] and other areas, that I am capable of dealing with all university issues, and I do have an interest in all university issues, not just narrow Latino focused issues. There's a certain symbolic issue that just because of who I am, but it's amusing, though, that people confuse Carlos and myself. At various points, he's been congratulated (John laughs) for my initial appointment as acting, and congratulated for my appointment as, the regular position. And on the other hand, I've been congratulated, or I've heard comments that were clearly for him, in fact, I've even been called Navarro, and so we say, we're twins, I mean it's real difficult to tell us apart—if it's somebody I don't want to be so gentle with, I say, "Yeah I know, all Mexicans look alike." (John laughs) So it's—we're used to that, but it's a real interesting experience. So there is a symbolic aspect where a Mexican is there. I think because of interest in a variety of things—equity, student equity, that we're moving towards some projects that would not have been done. The San Fernando High pilot project, some of the other things that are taking place, this ILE [Integrative Learning Experience] core curriculum, not that I'm—I mean I would not begin to say that I'm solely responsible, but I'm one of the people, and I know—other people have commented, [that] it's very helpful to have a dean come in—and someone who is supportive, or someone—they will say things like well, it's very helpful to be in a meeting, to have a dean who understands, you don't have to explain. Or faculty, and also staff and EOP will come in and we're working on the school-based equity and they'll say you know—I've been involved in equity all this time,

so it's not a question of convincing me, and so in these areas, I think it does make a difference. Going out there with voice, the UNO(??) type organization for the valley, first met on campus the first year there for the annual conference, President Cleary did the welcoming and so on, the second year I got to go over, because it's heavily Latino. And you know, there's a symbolic value there too, and I know that in some of the community things I'm involved in, the fact that I'm a dean—people aren't quite sure what a dean is or what a dean does, but they know that we don't have a lot, so that there's an impact there—so I think yeah, there are ways, and as I indicated in our earlier discussion I guess over lunch is that, the San Fernando project and the pilot of the project of going over there with the faculty, going back, it's like—it's reinventing our own model if you will, where faculty and students go over there, and we went November first to talk—we got twenty eight students out of San Fernando High School last year—twenty eight first time freshmen, that's out of a high school of three thousand students. Now keep in mind that every year fifteen hundred tenth graders, sophomores go into that school, but only approximately five hundred seniors graduate, that's an incredible attrition that takes place across, but nevertheless, a graduating class of five hundred, five-fifty should send us more than twenty-eight. And we've heard that there were problems, racists in the counseling center, nobody's interested, this and that, so we went over there and with the little half-assed effort that we're doing, because it's pieced together and we're inviting faculty to come in, and it's a—we end up out, five hundred freshmen, two hundred five were interested, and what we did was that we said ok, the selection factor will be when you stop doing what you have to do, there are steps you have to take, you have to apply in November, you have to—and we've got on site admissions for these kids over there, we have a financial aid workshop, and they had to come over here and take the December second writing proficiency exam. We get their scores and what we've done, is since that they had on site admission, they're technically in university, now we can spend money—now I spent(??) three years ago I was raising this, we should do this, an everybody said, No, you can't because they're not our students. And everybody had all kinds of excuses why we couldn't do this kind of a pilot project. Now that I'm dean, I said, "I want to do it," everybody said, Yes, this is what we have to do now. Now people are very cooperative, right? (John laughs) Well, also I can pay for part of it, use discretionary money, and use some of the resources of the school. And getting those—actually it's English placement, because EPT [English placement test]—not the right purpose(??), EPT scores. We then have a group of sixty-seven students, and we tried to do it during their school day, and the union said, No, if you come in and teach developmental writing into these students during the hours of between eight and three, you're taking work away from us and our union doesn't allow that. So they said it has to be after—they said Saturday, and I said, "No, too many of these kids work." Approximately half of these kids every time you ask, are working. So I said, "We don't want to do it on Saturday." And then they said, Ok, after school. So we said, we're looking at three to four o'clock class in composition. It's our regular developmental writing, that we taught with our people but on site over there. Next thing you know, you got the band instructor, drama coach, the track coach, the baseball coach saying, You're going to kill our program, you can't do it after school. We have sixty-seven seniors at

San Fernando High School, who are there every morning at 7:00 a.m. taking a composition course—our 097 composition course. And they're already card-carrying CSUN students, they—that was really something, they started getting their photo ID's (John laughs) they were flashing them around, and they'll be—anybody out of that group that wants to be in the summer bridge will be in the bridge, so our plan is when they set foot here in September, and because they have daily contact with selected faculty members, we think it's a high probability that they're going to all be here, or a good number of them are going to be here. But they will come in not with a year's deficiency in terms of they have to do two semesters, 97 and 98, because remember, they have twenty weeks in their semester, and they meet daily, so that in the twenty weeks, we can get both 97 and 98—it's costing us some money to do this, but we're doing it. So that at least for the ones who can do it, they can come over here next fall as first-time freshmen, and be ready for freshman comp. So they'll be on target.

(00:20:52)

JB: They'll start at speed.

JG: They'll start at speed. And we've got sixty-seven of them in the program, there's all kinds of others, the two hundred and five, there's others coming back saying, Well hey, I missed the December second date. And I said, "I'm sorry, but we had to at some point—there had to be some way that we screened out or—" And it became a question of, if you stick with us, we're with you. We made a commitment to whatever, and we thought first, that we got twenty-eight, let's try to get that number so that the twenty-eight we would get, would be augmented by another twenty-eight because see, when we went, we went to the non-mag—they have an internal magnet over there. There's about a hundred of their five hundred seniors are in internal magnet, which is the gifted college prep—and those people are college bound anyway, and the magnet director's mad as hell at us because we told her we did not want to deal with those students, we wanted to go to the other four hundred. And that's what we've got; we drew the sixty-seven from those students. Real interesting, nine of them tested ready to go into freshman comp. So I figured what the hell, giving them freshman comp. So when they get over here, they will have freshman comp out of the way. So it's a small little thing, but now what we're doing, we're running(??) this, we already went back and talked to this year's juniors, and telling them that we don't want them to wait, we want them to take the SAT, and we're starting the process again, and we said, You've got to stay, you gotta stick with us. There again, we went to talk to all the juniors and said, We're giving you the chance that at any point you drop out, there's nothing we can do for you, and as long as you stay with us—and so they're all—we got them on the June second SAT, because we want them to have SAT scores in, then we'll take them the EPT, and we'll just line everything up and we'll use the summer to get everything ready.

JB: That's extraordinary.

JG: And we're now putting together a grad proposal to take to a variety of places, because what we want to do is start regularizing that, and we're talking with Apple about donating the new computers over there for the composition. So we talked with IBM, and they were eh, because we use IBM in the composition here, computers (unintelligible) instruction. And quite frankly, one of the reasons why I want to do that is one, is get these kids on computers, because the writing is so much easier when they go on computers, but two, we've had tremendous resistance from the teachers over there, I mean you would not believe. Comments like, "How dare you come over here with all your resources when we're so short, well we don't even have a book for every student, and you're coming in here like this." So we also provide—it took about forty-two hundred dollars to buy the books—see, high school kids don't buy their books. University students do, these students—some of these kids, I've seen the application, the parental income is eleven, twelve thousand dollars a year. Now when they get here, they'll have a nice financial aid packet and that will provide the books, so at this point, they don't have the money for books, so I think, well, that's another part of the program, so then it's forty-two hundred dollars for textbooks.

JB: So you look like a, do look like a rich uncle.

JG: Oh yeah, yeah, and not only that, there was a comment here at campus, well I said, "What we can do is you can buy the books, give them to them to use, and then you can bring them back to the bookstore and turn them in for cash and put it back." And I said, "God you know what, part of being a college student is, it's your book. You can write in it, you can tear the damn pages out, it's your book and you take it home, and you put it on the bookshelf, and that's part—" that's what you have to start developing, that kind of mentality in people. I am a person who has books, I'm a person who uses books, I'm a person who writes in books. Whatever way you study, you develop that, and you don't develop that by telling people no, don't write in the book because we have to turn it back in to get our one-third of the new price—it's not worth it. To me, it's just better just to give them the book and say, This is your book, put your name in it, and guard it because it's yours, and you use it in the way that it's most effective for you. But yeah, we do seem like the rich uncle, and a tremendous amount—when these poor students, it's been a real experience for these students. They very innocently walk into some of their classes and say, "I got accepted to Northridge, here's the letter." I got a couple phone calls from irate teachers saying, how dare you admit that student to your university," said, "You have no business, that student is not university caliber." I told him, fine—I got mad and I said, "You know what, we admit whoever we damn please to our university, that's our business, and if we fail to support them once they're here, that's another problem, but for this point—" And we're working on a—we're not going to just turn them loose. It's been real interesting working with people here. This has been a joint effort between humanities and science, science and math, in large part because of Warren Furumoto(?), he and I have been working a lot on this together. Some of the old timers in biology had really kicked in in a real interesting way, that they go out there, and they meet young kids who are excited about going to university.

They've also had the experience of having some really good, top-notch Latino students in their classes. And now, they want to work with these students. I mean, some of these people are five years from retirement, and their thing is, Well, you know, if you want me to work with a handful of them. And interestingly Ken Jones, who's an excellent biology instructor said, "Look, you want these students to succeed in biology, there's no secret to it. The key, and this is for all students is, whoever gives you the lecture, gives you the lab." So he says, "If we can take that bunch out of San Fernando, as many of those sixty-seven come in and put them in, I'll give them the lecture, on the condition that I also get the labs with them." To have somebody like that kick in, volunteered with us, see look, this is one posi—see, this is what you've got to do. So what we're planning on to do with those students, after they come to the bridge—see they're going to come in with what, eleven, twelve units of college work under their belts, because they'll get the six units which is developmental, it doesn't really count towards graduation, but it's still six units. They're going to get the six units of the summer bridge, part of which is baccalaureate credit. So they'll have in effect, a semester's worth under their belt—they'll be veterans when they get here. And then, we're still not going to just turn them loose, they're going to—for example, we're going to put them all into Ken's biology class. And he'll have a GA [graduate assistant] to work with him, but he's going to be there. And that is going to be, in essence, because of the staffing formulas, virtually his entire workload for the fall semester, and it's not going to be the washed down GE biology, this is going to be the biology for biology majors, because he's got another interesting idea, he says he thinks he could get some biology majors out of there.

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JB: So, everyone benefits from it.

JG: Yes, yes. The ability to, people to kick in, get excited about students who want to learn, who still think it's an incredible thing to be in the university, and to also see that as a chance to benefit. So it's been a real exciting experience.

JB: And new.

JG: Yes, and we're trying to get some funding, because one of the things—we want to take it even farther, is we want to use San Fernando High School as the point, and then link up with three feeder junior highs, and then fifteen elementary schools and say look, here's a little—if we run all over the place, the impact will be dissipated, but if we start focusing in on this one little pizza pie slice if you will, of the northeast San Fernando Valley—San Fernando High School has some of the worst statistics in the LA City Unified, in terms of graduation rates, in terms of parental income level, in terms of educational attainment level of the parents, it's just, one of the lowest, all the way down. So I figured, if we can go in there and change attrition rates, change scores on standardized tests, change whether or not people—we're going to be working with Mission College, this is the big proposal, it's (unintelligible) work with them, because not everybody can

come here, it just won't work, so we want to see if working with Mission College on some of this. And I say once again, non-magnet, see the magnet people, they'll be taken care of. We think we can actually—this is a ten, fifteen-year project, but it's the kind of thing that could make a difference in a whole lot of people's lives out there. It's been interesting, to go out there now, and to meet parents—parents who even during the application process, the step by steps we were going through that sometimes the kids weren't following through, so we had various people making phone calls, and sometimes the parents would say—

[END OF INTERVIEW]